

[illegible]

[0003] An alternative packaging approach is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,895,233 to Higashi et al., in which micropackages for infrared devices are fabricated by forming multiple infrared devices and associated bond pads in the surface of a sensing wafer, solder bonding an infrared-transparent capping wafer to the sensing wafer to enclose each of the infrared devices and leave their bond pads accessible, and then singulating the wafer assembly to produce individual packages, each containing an infrared device and each equipped with wirebond pads. Cavities are defined between the capping and sensing wafers to receive and/or provide clearance for each infrared device. The wafers can be assembled in a vacuum so that the cavities containing the infrared devices are evacuated and hermetically sealed.

[0004] Though the multiple micropackages of Higashi et al. can be array tested prior to singulation, the packages are not suitable for surface mounting.

Summary of Invention

[0005] The present invention provides an optical sensor package capable of being surface mounted, and in a form that enables multiple packages to be formed simultaneously and then array tested in a wafer stack prior to singulation.

[0006] Generally, the optical sensor package comprises a chip carrier, a device chip electrically and mechanically connected with solder connections to a first surface of the chip carrier, and a capping chip secured to the chip carrier to hermetically enclose the device chip. The device chip has an optical sensing element on a surface thereof, while the capping chip has means for enabling radiation to pass through the capping chip to the device chip. The chip carrier includes conductive vias that are electrically connected to the solder connections of the device chip and extend through the chip carrier to bond pads on a second surface of the chip carrier, enabling the package to be surface mounted with solder connections to a suitable substrate, such as a circuit board.

[0007] A method of fabricating the optical sensor package described above includes forming the chip carrier to contain the conductive vias, preferably through the use of a low temperature co-fired ceramic (LTCC) material and process. The device chip is then

secured with solder connections to the chip carrier to electrically connect the device chip to the conductive vias of the chip carrier, and then the capping chip is secured to the chip carrier to hermetically enclose the device chip. Thereafter, the package can be surface mounted to a suitable substrate, such as by reflowing solder bumps formed on the bond pads of the package or on the substrate.

[0008] As described above, a plurality of the packages can be simultaneously fabricated by defining a plurality of chip carriers in a chip carrier wafer, preferably formed of an LTCC material, and defining a plurality of capping chips in a capping chip wafer. After placement of the device chips on the chip carriers of the chip carrier wafer, the carrier and capping wafers can be bonded together before singulation to form the individual packages. As such, an optical sensor package of this invention has the ability to be array tested with other packages formed simultaneously in the same wafer, significantly reducing test time. In addition, the bonded wafers and the singulated packages can be handled with minimal risk of damage to the sensing element and any signal conditioning circuitry on the device chips. The ability to surface mount the packages further reduces mounting costs and time, and also provides increased reliability. Finally, the hermetically-sealed package minimizes and stabilizes undesirable heat loss from the sensing element, thus improving sensitivity and reducing long term drift.

[0009] Other objects and advantages of this invention will be better appreciated from the following detailed description.

Brief Description of Drawings

[0010] Figure 1 represents a cross-section of an optical sensor package in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention.

Detailed Description

[0011] Figure 1 represents an optical sensor package 10 that can be fabricated and surface mounted in accordance with this invention. The package 10 is shown as being formed by solder bonding a device chip carrier 12 to a capping chip 14, such that an optical sensing device chip 16 is enclosed and protected within a cavity 18 defined by and between the capping chip 14 and the device chip carrier 12, e.g., the cavity 18 is

Alternatively, the vias 28 and recess 20 would require being formed by machining, etching and/or additional process steps if another material for the device chip carrier 12 is used.

[0014] The optical sensing device chip 16 is represented as being a flip chip comprising a semiconductor substrate 30. An optical sensing element (not shown) is located on the upper surface of the chip 16, and can have a variety of transduction configurations. In a preferred embodiment, the sensing element is an infrared-sensing thermopile configured and fabricated in accordance with U.S. Patent Application Serial Nos. {Attorney Docket Nos. DP-306616 and DP-307129}, incorporated herein by reference. Signal conditioning circuitry (not shown) for the optical sensing element can be formed on the chip 16, though it is foreseeable that the circuitry could be formed on a separate signal conditioning chip that is electrically connected to the sensing device chip 16 through the device chip carrier 12.

[0015] The sensing device chip 16 is shown electrically connected with solder connections 32 to bond pads (not shown) on the recessed surface of the device chip carrier 12, which in turn are electrically interconnected with bond pads 34 on the lower surface of the device chip carrier 12 by metal vias 28. As discussed above, the metal vias 28 are preferably formed by screen printing during the green tape portion of LTCC fabrication of the device chip carrier 12, though other suitable methods could be used. With the bond pads 34, the sensing element on the sensing device chip 16 (and its signal conditioning circuitry) can be electrically interconnected with circuitry on a substrate, e.g., a circuit board 36, to which the package 10 is mounted by known surface mount methods, including solder connections 40 formed by known solder bumping and reflow techniques as represented in Figure 1.

[0016] In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the capping chip 14 is attached to the device chip carrier 12 with a solder seal ring 38 that surrounds the cavity 18, though it is foreseeable that glass frit or another bonding technique could be employed that is capable of providing hermetic sealing. Also in the preferred embodiment, the sensing device chip 16 is first reflow soldered to the chip carrier 12, after which the capping chip 14 and chip carrier 12 are solder bonded using a solder alloy for the ring 38 that has a lower reflow temperature than the solder alloy used for the solder

connections 32 between the sensing device chip 16 and chip carrier 12. For example, the solder connections 32 may be formed of 90Pb-10Sn, typically reflowed at peak temperatures of about 310 ° C to about 330 ° C, while the solder ring 38 may be 70Pb-30Sn, typically reflowed at peak temperatures of about 260 ° C to about 280 ° C. The lower reflow temperature solder alloy can be deposited on either of a pair of complementary solderable metal rings on the capping chip 14 or the chip carrier 12. Solder bonding of the chip 14 and chip carrier 12 with the seal ring 38 is preferably performed in a vacuum, with the result that the sensing device chip 16 is hermetically vacuum sealed within the cavity 18 to enhance the performance of the sensing element.

[0017] After assembly, the sensor device chip 16 within the package 10 is functionally tested. In the preferred embodiment in which multiple packages 10 are simultaneously formed with a pair of bonded capping and device carrier wafers, all of the sensor devices 16 within the packages 10 are array tested, followed by singulation of the bonded wafers to form multiple packages 10 of the type shown in Figure 1. Each package 10 that successfully passes testing is then placed and reflow soldered to the surface of a substrate, e.g., the circuit board 36 in Figure 1, using a solder whose melting temperature is less than that of the solders used to form the solder connections 32 and the solder seal ring 38. For example, the solder connections 40 attaching the package 10 to the circuit board 36 may be 63Sn-37Pb, typically reflowed at peak temperatures of about 210 ° C to about 230 ° C.

[0018] While the invention has been described in terms of a specific embodiment, it is apparent that other forms could be adopted by one skilled in the art. For example, various processing parameters could be used, the sensor package 10 could differ in appearance and construction from the embodiment shown in Figure 1, and appropriate materials could be substituted for those noted. Accordingly, the scope of the invention is to be limited only by the following claims.